

WEST END CITIZEN PRINCIPLES

1. Full citizen input is essential to the adoption and success of any small area plan. The Alexandria Goals for 2004-2009 by Council state explicitly that “The Development Process Encourages Community Participation.” Participation is a requirement, not an option.
2. The economic impact to the City of development or re-development of commercial, retail or industrial areas must be a paramount consideration. The effect on tax revenues, infrastructure costs, and recurring costs (schools, safety, fire protection, etc.) are key elements of economic impact.
3. Residential development should be a use secondary to development or redevelopment of commercial, retail or industrial areas, but a necessary part of adding a local market component for retail business uses.
4. Improving traffic and transport for the affected area must be a paramount value and consideration in any development or redevelopment plan. Mass transit modalities must be in operation as new development occurs. Any increased density should be “earned” by contributions to traffic mitigation and transit.
5. Because new development or redevelopment generates additional trips, owners should contribute to public transportation on a continuing basis to mitigate effects and costs. (The cash box pays for only one-fourth of transit cost; 3/4ths is city subsidy.)
6. Affordable housing, while a laudable citywide goal, should not be a major reason for increasing densities on parcels to be redeveloped. Affordable housing should be an integral part, but only a part, of mixed use development.

Application of the West End Citizen Principles to the Landmark/Van Dorn Plan:

1. In sharp contrast to crafting the 1992 small area plan for the locale, citizen input into this Landmark/Van Dorn planning process has been minimal and virtually none has occurred in the past few months. Rather, the proposed plan has been created almost entirely by City Staff with inputs from consultants and landowners.
2. To date no economic impact studies have been done regarding the plan for Landmark/Van Dorn. The proposed plan appears to be going in a direction exactly opposite to the recent recommendations of the Mayor’s Economic Sustainability Workgroup. The Workgroup has declared that: All development is NOT created equal – commercial is roughly twice as profitable to the City as

residential. Before going forward on Landmark/Van Dorn, economic impact studies are needed urgently.

The real property tax, sales tax, and other revenue implications of the proposed plan must be addressed by careful economic analysis. The abandonment of Landmark as a major retail center meeting the shopping needs of citizens of the City is not likely to be replaced in the City by other properties. The sales tax revenue previously generated by Landmark should not be forfeited without major governmental efforts to retain it or its equivalent as a commercial revenue generator, thereby making a balancing contribution and taking some burden from the City's residential property tax base.

Landmark is strategically located on the western boundary of Alexandria, adjacent to a major transportation artery. Its commercial advantages should be enhanced, not subordinated.

3. The cost of improving traffic and transportation for Landmark/Van Dorn must be paid for with substantial contributions from owners – and on a sustained basis – not just by the City. (The Director of T&ES has estimated just in infrastructure costs at \$80 million if the proposed Plan is to be realized.) Conscious efforts should be made to resist turning the Van Dorn corridor into a conduit for peak hour through traffic.

4. Affordable housing appears to be the rationale driving this Plan and the idea of giving additional densities to developers. The affordable housing consultants on Landmark/Van Dorn state in their report that “good opportunities” exist to advance affordable housing within the area within current FARs. We agree, noting that some 80% of the housing in the West End is rental, most of it affordable by City standards on income eligibility.

Provided by Jack Sullivan